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Original paper



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Service and Personnel of the Vladivostok Security Section, 1913–1914

Abstract

This article examines the regional characteristics of political surveillance in the Russian Empire through the example of the Vladivostok Security Section, which escaped abolition during the 1913–1914 reform of the political police initiated by Vladimir F. Dzhunkovsky. The Vladivostok Security Section represents what may be termed an “exceptional normal case”, illustrating both the empire-wide features and the distinctive regional characteristics of the imperial political police. The study combines an analysis of the organizational structure and operations of the Vladivostok Security Section as a state institution with a prosopographical examination of the officers of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes who served there. This combined approach makes it possible to reconstruct the day-to-day functioning of the political police and to assess the effectiveness of its operations. Throughout 1913–1914, officers and personnel of the Vladivostok Security Section maintained a high standard of political policing within the Primor Governor-Generalship, contributing to the relatively low level of revolutionary activity in the region. This effectiveness was achieved

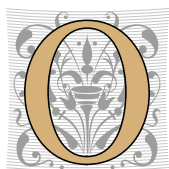
through an extensive network of informants operating not only in Vladivostok and other cities of the governor-generalship but also in nearby foreign cities with substantial Russian émigré communities, including Nagasaki and Shanghai. The professionalism of the Section's personnel played a decisive role in this success. Its staff included experienced officers with prior service in political investigations as well as younger gendarmes eager to pursue careers in investigative work. Despite bureaucratic tensions and personnel shortages, the Vladivostok Security Section operated effectively, exemplifying the principal features of political surveillance throughout the Russian Empire.

Keywords:

Vladivostok Security Section; Separate Corps of Gendarmes; Police Department; Priamur Governor-Generalship; Primorsk Oblast/Primorye; Political surveillance; V.F. Dzhunkovsky

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On 23 January 1913, Major General Vladimir Fyodorovich Dzhunkovsky was appointed Assistant Minister of the Interior in charge of the police and Commander of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes. His name is associated with one of the most extensive reforms in the history of the pre-revolutionary political police. Between 15 May 1913 and 19 July 1914, all Security Departments and Regional Security Sections¹ were abolished, and

¹ Also, “*the Okbrana*”.

their officers and personnel were incorporated into the staffs of the provincial Gendarme Directorates². Only the three metropolitan security sections – those of Warsaw, Moscow, and St. Petersburg – were exempted from liquidation because their existence had been established in the *Complete Collection (Digest) of Laws of the Russian Empire*³. Among the provincial sections, only the Turkestan Regional Security Section and the Vladivostok Security Section survived the reform. Both were retained for essentially the same administrative reason: neither the Turkestan nor the Priamur Governor-Generalship possessed provincial Gendarme Directorates capable of assuming their functions. In the case of Turkestan, the section's preservation was additionally justified by the presence of a well-developed Pan-Islamist movement, which constituted a tangible and measurable security threat. The Vladivostok Section, by contrast, was maintained in a region where no organized revolutionary movement or anti-government nationalist movement existed. This circumstance makes its continued existence particularly worthy of investigation.

Although the first Russian settlements appeared on the Pacific coast during the seventeenth century, the active colonization and development of the region began only after the incorporation into the Russian Empire, in 1858–1860, of the southern territories of the Far East most suitable for settlement: the lower Amur Valley (Priamurye) and the coastal region lying between the Amur, Ussuri, and Tumen Rivers and the Pacific Ocean (Primorye). Because these territories became part of the empire *de facto* only after the Great Reforms, their administrative institutions developed during a new phase of Russian modernization. Many government bodies were created virtually from scratch, without the long process of local institutional evolution characteristic of the older governorates of the empire. For this reason, examining the system of political surveillance in the Priamur region during 1913–1914 makes it possible to observe not only its local peculiarities but also the broader empire-wide patterns reflected within it – just as a single drop of water from the world's oceans contains the same chemical elements characteristic of the entire body of water.

² Хутарев-Гарнишевский В.В. Противостояние. Спецслужбы, армия и власть накануне падения Российской империи, 1913–1917 гг. М.: Изд-во Института Гайдара, 2020. С. 156–158.

³ Ibid. С. 152.

Concentrating on the period of Dzhunkovsky's reform, which sought to abolish the Security Sections, also helps avoid the misleading tendency to explain the development of political policing primarily through the prism of Russia's preparation for the First World War. Such an approach risks imposing a predetermined causal relationship between these phenomena and forcing the empirical evidence to conform to a known historical outcome. Rejecting this teleological perspective instead allows the phenomenon to be examined in all its historical particularity, taking into account the unexpected and sometimes contingent events, as well as the influence of individual actors, that characterize the historical process.

The search for the “unexpected” and the “exceptional” naturally shifts attention toward subjective factors – namely, the personalities of the gendarme officers engaged in political investigations, together with their habits, professional experience, and even illnesses, all of which affected their work. At this level of analysis, the method of detailed description offers the most fruitful strategy for reconstructing historical reality.

The present study therefore combines two complementary approaches. The Vladivostok Security Section is examined both as a component of the empire-wide system of political control and as a community of individuals whose biographies shaped its everyday functioning. This dual perspective makes it possible to evaluate the institution both from the standpoint of what imperial bureaucrats in St. Petersburg expected it to accomplish and from the standpoint of what it actually was in the daily practice of the Vladivostok gendarmerie.

Turning to the institutional organization of political surveillance in the Priamur Governor-Generalship during 1913–1914, it is appropriate first to examine the records of the Headquarters of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes. Among these, the most significant is a memorandum entitled *Gendarme Supervision within the Priamur Governor-Generalship*, submitted to the Chief of Staff of the Corps on 27 May 1914⁴. The memorandum was prepared as part of discussions initiated in January 1914 concerning a proposal to establish a

⁴ Государственный архив Российской Федерации (ГА РФ). Ф. 110. Оп. 3. Д. 3607. Л. 36–38 об.

Priamur Regional Gendarme Directorate. The project was proposed by Colonel Aleksei Vasilyevich Vasilyev, Chief of the Irkutsk Gendarme Directorate and, concurrently, Head of the East Siberian Regional Security Section. Consequently, the memorandum closely parallels Vasilyev's report of 29 December 1913 on the organization of political surveillance in the Russian Far East. The Vladivostok Security Section was subordinate to the East Siberian Regional Security Department, and Vasilyev was therefore responsible for inspecting its activities.

According to the memorandum prepared by the Headquarters of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes, gendarme supervision in the Priamur Governor-Generalship rested upon two principal institutions: the Gendarme Police Directorate of the Ussuri Railway and the Vladivostok Security Section. The Railway Gendarme Directorate had been established in 1892–1893 and maintained branches in Vladivostok, Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, Khabarovsk, and Muravyov-Amursky Station. Owing to the absence of a fully constituted Provincial Gendarme Directorate in Primorskaya Oblast, the railway gendarmes were entrusted from 1905 onward with conducting preliminary investigations into political offenses. The remaining functions ordinarily assigned to provincial gendarme administrations, including political surveillance, however, did not fall within their jurisdiction⁵. It was also noted that, beginning in 1908, one officer of the Railway Gendarme Directorate, acting in coordination with the Commandant of the Vladivostok Fortress (usually the Directorate's aid-de-camp), assisted the regular police in inspecting the passports and baggage of passengers arriving from or departing abroad through the port. Lacking the personnel and resources necessary to perform these duties effectively, the gendarme officer was, in practice, reduced to observing the actions of the ordinary police⁶.

The memorandum identified the Vladivostok Security Section, together with its detective posts in Blagoveshchensk, Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, and Khabarovsk, as the region's specialized political investigation service. Formally, the Section's jurisdiction extended across the entire territory of Amur and Primorskaya Oblasts. In reality, however, the Vladivostok Security Section exercised direct surveillance only within the

⁵ Ibid. A. 36.

⁶ Ibid. A. 36 о6.



Lieutenant Colonel Prince Alexander Platonovich Mikeladze,
Commander of the Port Arthur Fortress Gendarme Detachment, in Port Arthur.
*Photograph, 1905. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division,
LC-DIG-ppmsca-08055*

city and fortress of Vladivostok. The Nikolsk-Ussuriysky detective post generally relied upon officers of the regular police to obtain intelligence and carry out operational measures in Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, Iman, and Olginsk uyezds, while the activities of the Khabarovsk detective post were effectively confined to the city of Khabarovsk and its surrounding district. The precise territorial jurisdiction of the Blagoveshchensk detective post outside the city itself remains impossible to determine from the available sources⁷.

The title of the memorandum's next section – *The Unsatisfactory Nature of the Existing Organization* – accurately reflected its content. Staff officers of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes observed that political surveillance was, in practice, confined to the major urban centers and the exclusion zone of the Ussuri Railway. It was virtually absent from important settlements and military garrisons such as Razdolnoye, Posyet, Shmakovka, Iman, Vladimiro-Aleksandrovskoye, and others. Particular attention was drawn to the numerous small mining camps, coal mines, logging settlements, goldfields, and fishing stations scattered across the taiga and the Pacific coast. These, the report observed,

⁷ Ibid. A. 37.

“remain not merely beyond the supervision of the specialized organs responsible for political investigations, but frequently even beyond the reach of ordinary police surveillance, since officers of the regular police, owing to their insufficient numbers, the enormous distances involved, the absence of roads, and primitive means of communication – often interrupted altogether – are simply incapable of exercising such supervision”⁸.

The report further emphasized that “by virtue of the geographical and political position of the Far East”, particularly close supervision of the numerous military units stationed throughout the Priamur Governor-Generalship was essential. Because of the harsh conditions under which these troops were quartered, soldiers often harbored grievances and therefore required constant monitoring. Another difficulty identified in the memorandum was the uncertainty surrounding the respective responsibilities of gendarme officers. Preliminary investigations into state crimes were frequently shifted by the Railway Gendarme Directorate onto officers of the Security Section, while the heavy workload borne by both organizations meant that even routine requests became mired in bureaucratic delay⁹.

The deliberately alarmist picture presented in the memorandum was clearly intended to persuade the authorities in St. Petersburg of the necessity of establishing a fully-fledged Priamur Regional Gendarme Directorate. Indeed, the report concluded by presenting this measure as the only effective solution to the shortcomings of political supervision in the region. As early as December 1912, Colonel Aleksei Vasilyevich Vasilyev, Chief of the Irkutsk Provincial Gendarme Directorate, had argued for increasing the number of detective posts within the Priamur Governor-Generalship. One year later, in December 1913, the Director of the Police Department informed the Headquarters of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes that, in Vasilyev’s opinion, “owing to the various local conditions and circumstances that have, in recent years, contributed to the exceptionally rapid growth of revolutionary and other criminal activity among the population of the Empire’s eastern frontier, overcrowded with criminal exiles, it has become extremely difficult

⁸ Ibid. A. 37–37 o6.

⁹ Ibid. A. 38.

to maintain accurate and systematic surveillance with the number of branch detective posts currently existing within the section under his command”¹⁰. This demonstrates that, in official terminology, gendarme supervision referred to the institutional system of political policing responsible for monitoring the political reliability of the population, as well as of particular social groups and individuals.

Colonel Vasilyev’s efforts to expand the network of detective posts and strengthen political surveillance in the Priamur Governor-Generalship received active support from the regional authorities, including the Priamur Governor-General and the Prosecutor of the Irkutsk Judicial Chamber. Like Vasilyev, they viewed the region as a remote imperial frontier saturated with potentially dangerous revolutionary elements¹¹. Ironically, representatives of the revolutionary underground perceived the situation quite differently. In October 1913, the prominent Socialist Revolutionary activist Nikolai Arefyev, secretary of the Nikolsk-Ussuriysky newspaper *Ussuriyskaya Okraina*, complained privately among his associates that “at the present time the vast region of Eastern Siberia is completely cut off from the revolutionary centers of the West”¹². Here, “Eastern Siberia” referred to the entire Russian territory stretching from Lake Baikal to the Pacific Ocean. The same intelligence report quoted Arefyev as stating that Harbin was the only city in the region where party activity remained vigorous. Even there, revolutionary literature was insufficient for the needs of the wider region, and organizational work had to be conducted with extreme caution. Writing in 1940, the Soviet historian and former revolutionary Vasily Golionko similarly argued that, beginning in 1908, the revolutionary movement in the region had been systematically destroyed through the suppression of existing organizations and the arrest of isolated activists¹³. Although the Governor-Generalship contained a considerable population of former and current political exiles, this concentration of “revolutionary elements” did not translate into widespread revolutionary sentiment. As Golionko summarized the situation, “the upsurge of the mass workers’ movement

¹⁰ Ibid. А. 3.

¹¹ Ibid. А. 5.

¹² ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 9. Ч. 64. Лит. Б. А. 141.

¹³ Ibid. Ф. Р-9147. Оп. 1. Д. 60. А. 63.

in the central provinces of Russia between 1911 and 1914 was not reflected in Primorye for entirely objective reasons”¹⁴.

The contrast between the perceptions of the gendarmerie and those of the revolutionaries themselves makes it necessary to examine the actual operations of the political police.

In January 1913, the Vladivostok Security Section, which formed the core of political surveillance and political investigations in the Primur Governor-Generalship, employed only eighteen confidential informants. Of these, seven were regular secret agents, while eight served as auxiliary informants. Among the principal agents, two monitored the activities of the local Socialist Revolutionaries, two observed the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, two handled “strictly confidential matters” – primarily the interception and examination of correspondence – and one was assigned to monitor students of the Imperial Oriental Institute¹⁵. The overlap of operational assignments was encouraged rather than discouraged. Thus, one of the agents responsible for monitoring the Socialist Revolutionaries also reported on the students of the IOI, while an informant who had infiltrated the Social Democrats simultaneously supplied intelligence concerning the political attitudes of sailors in the Siberian Flotilla¹⁶. Among the auxiliary agents, five monitored morale and political sentiment within the garrison of the Vladivostok Fortress. Two assisted in gathering intelligence on the Socialist Revolutionary organizations, two performed similar duties with respect to the Social Democrats, while one informant each was assigned to the sailors of the Siberian Flotilla and the workers of the military port¹⁷.

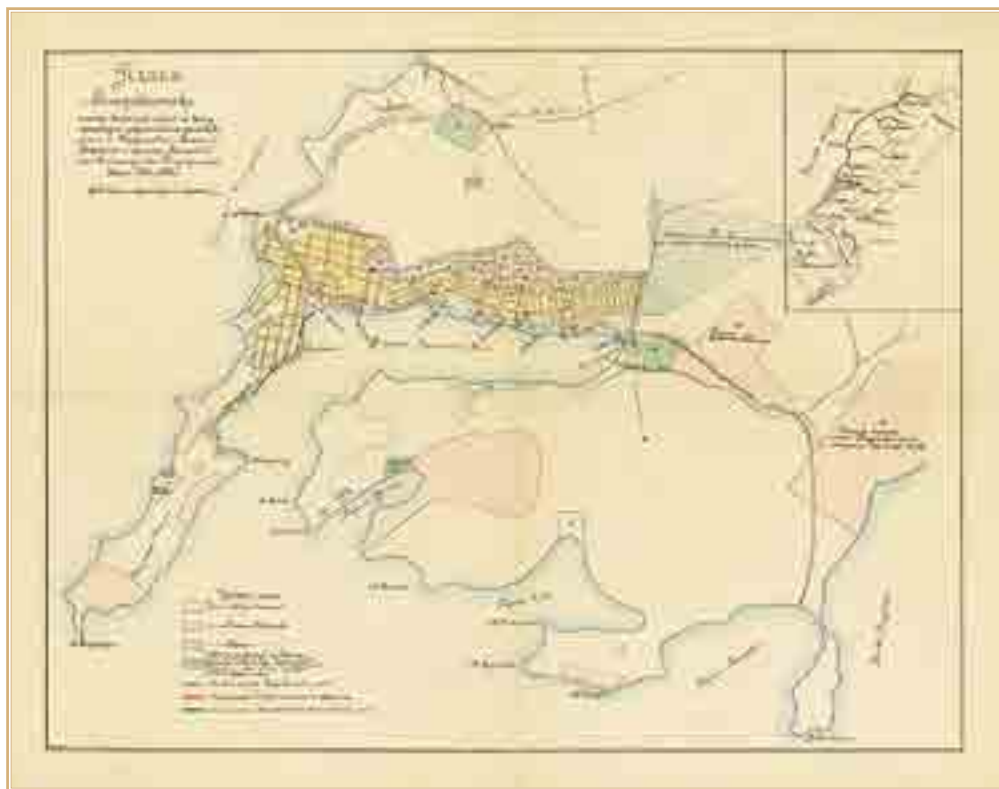
In January 1914, the Vladivostok *Okhrana* employed a total of eleven confidential informants, consisting of five regular agents and six auxiliary agents. Two of the regular agents continued to be responsible for the interception and examination of correspondence, two monitored the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs), and one was assigned to the Social Democrats. Among the auxiliary agents, two observed the Social Democrats, one monitored the Socialist Revolutionaries, another reported

¹⁴ Ibid. А. 62.

¹⁵ Hereafter – IOI.

¹⁶ Государственный архив Иркутской области (ГАИО). Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 766. А. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid.



Plan of Vladivostok, 1897.
From open sources

on the mood within the military, while two were tasked with gathering intelligence on major criminal gangs¹⁸.

Although fluctuations in the size of the agent network and shifts in its operational priorities are not particularly informative in themselves, the surviving intelligence reports provide a much clearer picture of the Security Department's day-to-day work. As these reports demonstrate, the Vladivostok Security Section encountered no well-developed revolutionary movement during 1913–1914. The once-powerful Socialist Revolutionary organization that had instigated three successive mutinies among the Vladivostok Fortress garrison and the sailors of the Siberian Flotilla during the Revolution of 1905–1907 was reduced to little more than a memory carefully preserved by a handful of surviving activists. In March 1913, Stefan Stelmakher, a peasant from Lublin Governorate, together with Alexander Gantimurov, a descendant of

¹⁸ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 824. Л. 3.

the Daur princely family, attempted to establish an agricultural society known as *Druzhestvo* (Fellowship) as a cover for the clandestine dissemination of socialist ideas among the peasants of Primorskaya Oblast¹⁹. The society, however, failed to obtain official registration, and the plan for political agitation consequently collapsed. In May, a small circle of local Socialist Revolutionaries and sympathizers – including Ayupov, a bookseller, Slobodchikov, a clerk in the 36th Siberian Rifle Regiment, and Vysotsky, a demolition worker employed in the construction of the Vladivostok Fortress – planned to distribute leaflets calling for renewed revolutionary activity and commemorating the events of 1905. To reduce the risk of detection, the leaflets were to be passed discreetly from hand to hand rather than distributed publicly. The head of the Security Section, Captain Yevgeny Lalevich, even received authorization from his superiors in Irkutsk to suppress the group. In the event, however, no operation proved necessary. According to the conspirators' plan, the leaflets were to be duplicated on the hectograph belonging to the 36th Regiment, which Slobodchikov intended to transport from the regiment's quarters on Russky Island to Vladivostok. Because the May Day holiday was approaching, however, military authorities restricted leave for conscript soldiers. Slobodchikov was therefore unable either to retrieve the hectograph or to travel to the city. Shortly afterward, members of the group became aware that they were under surveillance and ceased all active operations, thereby depriving the Section of sufficient grounds for arrest²⁰.

Thereafter, only isolated individuals attracted the attention of the political police. During the summer of 1913, one such figure was Władysław Tręmbiński, a native of Warsaw, employed as a salesman in the Sinkevich (*Sinkiewicz*) brothers' bookshop. He frequently promised customers that he could procure prohibited literature and openly expressed his belief that Polish independence would be highly desirable²¹. In the course of these conversations he repeatedly voiced sympathy for the Polish Socialist Party. In July, Tręmbiński departed Vladivostok for an unknown destination. At the end of September, another individual,

¹⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 9ч. 64 л. Б. А. 23.

²⁰ Ibid. А. 36.

²¹ Ibid. А. 55, 72.

Blazhievsky (Błażewski), came under surveillance on suspicion of receiving revolutionary literature from Nagasaki and Shanghai for subsequent distribution²².

Despite the weakness of the local Socialist Revolutionary movement, the Vladivostok gendarmes did not regard it as harmless. In December 1913, the Security Section placed the head of Vladivostok Prison under surveillance after receiving intelligence that Socialist Revolutionaries intended to assassinate him in retaliation for his previous service at the Akatuy penal colony²³. The assassination was never carried out, however, because the designated Socialist Revolutionary militant was arrested before he could act. During the winter of 1914, the Police Department requested that the Vladivostok Security Section investigate the political reliability of Pavel Sosulin, a former student of the IOI who had participated in a Socialist Revolutionary study circle in 1912. In his reply by telegram, Captain Lalevich explained that the circle had disbanded after its very first meeting because an outbreak of scarlet fever had forced the Institute to close for quarantine. The organization had never resumed its activities, and neither Sosulin nor any of its former participants had subsequently displayed signs of political disloyalty²⁴.

By the spring of 1914, there was no longer even the semblance of an organized Socialist Revolutionary organization in Vladivostok. Only scattered individuals remained, united by common memories and convictions but lacking any organizational structure²⁵. Interest in the remaining Socialist Revolutionaries briefly revived at the end of April, when leaflets describing workers' strikes in St. Petersburg and European Russia²⁶ were discovered scattered about after an amateur theatrical performance given by sailors of the Siberian Naval Crew. Investigation revealed that the leaflets had been printed by Socialist Revolutionary émigrés in Australia and transported to Vladivostok aboard the Volunteer Fleet steamship *Simferopol* by a Polish waiter known only

²² Ibid. Л. 105.

²³ Российский государственный исторический архив Дальнего Востока (РГИА ДВ). Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 14. Л. 3.

²⁴ Ibid. Л. 15.

²⁵ ГАРФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 244. Д. 9ч. 64 л. Б. Л. 7.

²⁶ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 1. Д. 34. Л. 51.

as “Kazimirschik (Kazimirczyk)”²⁷. Since no comparable incidents followed, the matter, as on previous occasions, never progressed beyond routine surveillance.

The Section’s work against the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) differed somewhat. Unlike the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Social Democrats potentially enjoyed a stable social base among the workers of the military port. In April 1913, port workers launched a strike in protest against violations of overtime payment regulations. One official report noted: “A major evil in the Port is the workers’ dining hall. Before its establishment, craftsmen had only a half-hour lunch break; after the dining hall opened, the allotted lunch period was increased to one hour, during which more than 300 workers gathered together and had ample opportunity to exchange ideas”²⁸. The dining hall also provided uncontrolled access to the port for outsiders.

Nevertheless, the Security Section received explicit instructions not to intervene so long as the strike remained exclusively economic in character. Ultimately, the strike leaders, Pyotr Radayev and Semyon Kostyrev, left Vladivostok for St. Petersburg, where they subsequently collaborated with the Social Democratic press on labor issues. It later became clear that both men were indeed Social Democrats but had deliberately refrained from openly declaring their political views or attempting to politicize the strike in Vladivostok, fearing immediate dismissal and arrest²⁹.

Another focal point of surveillance was the Pushkin People’s Reading House, which regularly hosted literary evenings and theatrical performances for the city’s residents while also operating literacy classes for adults and a school for workers’ children. By May 1913, the institution’s governing board consisted entirely of Social Democrats: Aleksander Tamm, Nikolai Chernenko, and Pavel Mavropulo³⁰. Tamm had been known to the Security Section as one of the city’s leading Social Democrats and had remained under surveillance since 1908. Chernenko had likewise been monitored since November 1908³¹ as the recipi-

²⁷ Ibid. Л. 93.

²⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 5ч. 64 л. Б. Л. 24.

²⁹ Ibid. Л. 44.

³⁰ Ibid. Л. 35.

³¹ Государственный архив Хабаровского края (ГАХК). Ф. И-30. Оп. 1. Д. 1. Л. 217.

ent of Social Democratic newspapers sent from Paris. Mavropulo came under police observation in 1911 after attempting, while still a student at the IOI, to organize student disturbances³². Consequently, even the relatively legal public activities of Vladivostok's Social Democrats remained under close supervision.

The same was true of their clandestine activities. In 1913, the bank employee Grigory Mumzi and several associates attempted to re-establish the Regional Committee of the RSDLP, which had been destroyed by the authorities in 1908³³. The Section was informed of these plans from the outset, making direct intervention unnecessary. Fearing exposure and arrest, Mumzi and his associates ultimately abandoned the project. Vladivostok's position as a frontier city also shaped the Section's work. In January 1914, the East Siberian Regional Security Section instructed its Vladivostok counterpart to monitor possible contacts between local Social Democrats and Chinese revolutionary organizations, since comparable connections between the RSDLP and Chinese revolutionaries had previously been uncovered in Tomsk³⁴.

At the beginning of February 1914, the leadership of the Vladivostok Criminal Investigation Department informed the Security Section that a certain Ambrosimov was residing in the city, "engaging somewhat in politics while selling revolvers of various types to various individuals"³⁵. A search of his premises proved fruitless, as Ambrosimov had fled before the police arrived. The episode nevertheless demonstrates that the Security Section worked closely with other law-enforcement agencies, particularly the Criminal Investigation Department. There were also successful operations. Following the interception of private correspondence, the Section placed Alexander Shanandin under surveillance after discovering that he had exchanged letters with Savva Koleiko³⁶, a Social Democratic activist and trade-union organizer in Blagoveshchensk. Surveillance continued from 9 to 23 February and culminated in Shanandin's successful arrest. He was subsequently

³² Ibid. А. 111.

³³ Ibid. А. 119.

³⁴ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 17. А. 26.

³⁵ Ibid. Оп. 1. Д. 33. А. 38.

³⁶ Ibid. А. 64.



Panorama of Vladivostok. Photograph, 1918.
Photographic Collection of the Vladivostok Fortress Museum-Reserve.
Accession No. МЗБК ОФ 804 Фкр 313

identified as Pyotr Poryadin³⁷, a peasant from Tobolsk Governorate who had deserted from the 1st Siberian Rifle Regiment.

In addition to monitoring specific individuals, the Section also kept watch over events considered significant for the Social Democratic movement. In February 1914, the head of the Vladivostok Security Section instructed the city chief of police to reinforce police patrols throughout the city in order to prevent public gatherings, demonstrations, and the distribution of revolutionary leaflets on 23 February, the date designated for the celebration of International Women's Day³⁸.

The extent to which the Primorye Social Democrats had become subject to police surveillance is illustrated by a revealing episode. In the summer of 1914, after the outbreak of the First World War, Vladimir Lenin, then residing in Kraków, was briefly detained by the Austrian authorities. During the search, the police confiscated a notebook belonging to his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, containing the contact addresses used by the Central Committee of the RSDLP throughout Russia since 1912. The notebook was published in 1959 in the journal *Historical Archive* by scholars from the Central Party Archive of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. The notebook listed two contact

³⁷ Государственный архив Приморского края (ГАПК). Ф. 16. Оп. 1. Д. 10. Л. 24–24 об.

³⁸ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 17. Л. 11.

addresses in Vladivostok: Aleksander G. Antonov, care of the Siberian Commercial Bank, and Post Office Box No. 76 at the city post office³⁹.

Aleksander Gavrilovich Antonov, an employee of the Siberian Commercial Bank and the son of a collegiate secretary from Nizhnedevitsk District of Voronezh Governorate, had been under surveillance by the Vladivostok Security Section since August 1912. The reason was his correspondence with Maxim Gorky and the Russian émigré colony on Capri, maintained through Antonov's brother⁴⁰. The story of Post Office Box No. 76 proved even more remarkable. In February 1913, postal officials informed the Security Department that the box had received from Kraków the brochure *The All-Russian Conference of the RSDLP* together with issues nos. 28–29 of the journal *Sotsial-Demokrat*, as well as hectographed revolutionary leaflets. Two additional pamphlets – *Notice and Resolutions of the Conference of the Central Committee of the RSDLP with Party Workers*⁴¹ – arrived from Germany. In reality, however, Post Office Box No. 76 had itself been secretly rented by the Vladivostok Security Section. As the subsequent investigation revealed, shortly before his transfer to another post in late February 1913, Captain Konstantin Nagrodsky, Lalevich's predecessor as Head of the Section, had deliberately ordered several RSDLP pamphlets and journals to be delivered there in order to expand the Section's collection of illegal literature for operational purposes⁴². Thus, of the two Vladivostok contact addresses known to the Central Committee of the RSDLP, one was already under surveillance, while the other had in fact been created by the political police themselves.

It should also be noted that, apart from maintaining contact with the Party's Central Committee, the local Social Democrats faced persistent organizational difficulties. An intelligence report from September 1913 identified a certain Poluektov as one of the leaders of the local organization, describing him as an excellent orator and a convinced Marxist⁴³. In December of the same year, Nikifor Semyonovich Poluek-

³⁹ Адресная книга ЦК РСДРП (1912–1914 гг.) // Исторический архив. 1959. № 1. С. 24.

⁴⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 242. Д. 20ч. 64 л. Б. А. 141.

⁴¹ Ibid. Оп. 243. Д. 5ч. 64 л. А. А. 1–2.

⁴² Ibid. Л. 4.

⁴³ Ibid. Д. 5ч. 64 л. Б. А. 63.

tov, a fitter employed at the Vladivostok Military Port, was recruited as an agent of the Security Department under the codename “Severov”. His superiors characterized him as “an intelligent man with an excellent understanding of the labor movement and a highly valuable operative”⁴⁴. His responsibilities included reporting on the activities of the Pushkin People’s Reading House and monitoring the political attitudes of the military port workers.

The Vladivostok *Okhrana* did not confine its attention solely to revolutionary organizations. It also monitored a range of phenomena that were not overtly political. Because Vladivostok was both a fortress city and the base of a military garrison numbering approximately 60,000 men, military and naval personnel naturally attracted the attention of the political police. In 1913, Captain Lalevich recruited an agent under the codename “Dimitriev” to report on the attitudes of naval officers⁴⁵. Most of Dimitriev’s reports dealt not with overt political questions but with the everyday lives of officers in the Siberian Flotilla and their relationships with enlisted sailors. Remembering that mutiny usually arose from grievances over living conditions and military service rather than from ideology alone, the gendarmes sought to monitor the daily conditions aboard the fleet’s vessels. Surveillance of the rank-and-file soldiers of the Vladivostok Fortress garrison, however, became considerably more difficult as a consequence of one of V.F. Dzhunkovsky’s most controversial reforms. In March 1913, he issued a special circular ordering the abolition of all political police informants serving within the armed forces. As he explained, “it should be the duty of the officers of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes to protect military units from the intrusion of revolutionary agitators from outside”⁴⁶. Direct surveillance of enlisted personnel, he argued, should instead be entrusted to their own commanding officers, regardless of whether those officers possessed any aptitude for intelligence work. In his memoirs, Dzhunkovsky later maintained that the presence of gendarme agents within military units undermined discipline and

⁴⁴ Ibid. Ф. 4888. Оп. 5. Д. 605. Л. 29–29 об.

⁴⁵ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 766. Л. 7.

⁴⁶ Политическая полиция России между реформами. От В.К. Плеве до В.Ф. Джунковского. Сб. документов / Вступ. ст., сост. и коммент. Е.И. Щербакова. М.: АИРО-XXI; СПб.: Алетейя, 2021. С. 275.

corrupted the armed forces⁴⁷. However controversial this policy may have been, it was implemented faithfully by the officers of the Corps of Gendarmes. Accordingly, on 24 April 1913, Captain Lalevich reported that he had dismissed every confidential informant serving among the enlisted personnel of both the army and the navy⁴⁸.

Monitoring of military personnel nevertheless continued through civilian informants who maintained regular contact with them. On 26 April, Shibkov, an official attached to the Security Section for special assignments, recruited the auxiliary agent “Volga” to report on the sailors of the Siberian Flotilla⁴⁹. On 12 July, another agent, “Vysokiĭ” (“Tall”)⁵⁰, was recruited to monitor the attitudes of the enlisted soldiers stationed in the Vladivostok Fortress garrison. In accordance with Dz-hunkovsky’s instructions, cooperation with military commanders also became an important source of intelligence. In January 1914, Captain Lalevich informed the commander of the 3rd Vladivostok Fortress Artillery Regiment that one of his soldiers, Jan Dobrowolski, a native of Warsaw Governorate, had before his conscription encouraged fellow Poles to join the Polish Cavalry Society, an organization established in Galicia for the purpose of spreading revolutionary ideas. Lalevich therefore requested that the regimental commander place Dobrovolsky under close observation⁵¹. Ordinary denunciations likewise continued to play their customary role. During the same month, the *Okhrana* received an anonymous accusation against Captain Czesław Rybinski, a military engineer responsible for the design and construction of Fort No. 6 of the Vladivostok Fortress. According to a neighbor at his summer residence, Rybinski and his wife were distributing illegal literature among the fortress garrison and construction workers⁵². The subsequent investigation demonstrated that these allegations were entirely unfounded.

Only in exceptional circumstances did such investigations proceed beyond routine surveillance. In February 1914, officers searched the

⁴⁷ Джунковский В.Ф. Воспоминания. Т. 2. М.: Изд-во им. Сабашниковых, 1997. С. 179.

⁴⁸ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 766. Л. 14.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Л. 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Л. 24.

⁵¹ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 16. Л. 2.

⁵² Ibid. Л. 27.

residence of Lieutenant Boris Alemanov of the 2nd Vladivostok Fortress Artillery Regiment after his former orderly claimed that Alemanov had possessed illegal literature while previously stationed in Krasnoyarsk. During the search, officers indeed discovered two pamphlets. Alemanov explained that he had confiscated them from the very orderly who had later denounced him⁵³. Once the authorities concluded that the lieutenant had been maliciously slandered by his former subordinate, he was immediately released.

In addition to military personnel, the Security Section also monitored members of various civic organizations. During the spring of 1912, officers first encountered the distribution of what they described as “tendentious” literature in the Ukrainian language advocating national autonomy within the Russian Empire. By January 1913, the Section had established that correspondents of the Kyiv-based organization Rodina (“Homeland”) were operating in Vladivostok and regularly receiving the organization’s brochures and journals⁵⁴. In April 1913, the Ukrainian Amateur Dramatic Circle was established at the Pushkin People’s Reading House. Its declared objectives included maintaining close relations with other Ukrainophile organizations throughout the empire and promoting the reading and circulation of Ukrainian-language literature, including publications printed abroad⁵⁵. In January 1914, the organizers of the Vladivostok Ukrainian circle considered establishing a similar organization in Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, the second-largest city of Primorskaya Oblast, but ultimately abandoned the project for fear of arrest. Around the same time, a Ukrainian Social Democratic discussion circle also began to emerge around the theatrical society in Vladivostok⁵⁶.

It is worth noting that the performances staged by the Ukrainian dramatic circle enjoyed considerable popularity because productions presented in Ukrainian could often evade censorship that would have prohibited the same plays in Russian. Nevertheless, the circle’s activities never developed into a broader political movement – and not merely

⁵³ Ibid. А. 36.

⁵⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 9ч. 64 л. Б. А. 4.

⁵⁵ Ibid. А. 35.

⁵⁶ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 244. Д. 163ч. 64 л. Б. А. 7 об. – 8.

because its members feared police repression. The two principal leaders of the circle were Stepan Mostipan, a railway telegraph operator, and Ivan Antonyuk, a turner at the Vladivostok Military Port. Mostipan had in fact been recruited as a confidential informant by the Gendarme Directorate of the Ussuri Railway under the codename “Ganul” in November 1912⁵⁷. Antonyuk, for his part, was recruited by the *Okhrana* under the codename “Kamchatsky” in November 1914⁵⁸.

In the autumn of 1913, the Section placed under surveillance two members of the State Duma, Fyodor Rodichev and Alexander Rusanov, during their tour of the Russian Far East. In private conversations with representatives of the local press, Rodichev urged provincial newspapers to support the informal alliance that had emerged between the liberal Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) and the parties of the Left. Describing the parliamentary opposition’s principal objective as the struggle against the government, he advised sympathizers to remain inactive and avoid overt political activity, comparing the situation in 1913 with that of 1903, when, in his view, a wave of economic strikes had laid the foundations for the subsequent revolutionary movement. At public meetings, Rodichev delivered lectures on Aleksander Herzen, couched in more restrained language but nevertheless expressing an unmistakably oppositional political outlook⁵⁹. Aleksander Rusanov, the Trudovik deputy elected from Primorskaya Oblast and known to maintain contacts with the Social Democrats, pursued an even more openly political course. Without hesitation, he criticized Nikolai Gondatti, Governor-General of the Priamur region, in the local press, activities that likewise attracted the close attention of the *Okhrana*⁶⁰.

The growing politicization of the regional press also became an object of police scrutiny. Following an increasingly bitter conflict between the editors of Vladivostok’s principal newspapers and Vice Governor Vladimir Ladezhinsky, Captain Lalevich prepared a memorandum analyzing the local press. In it, he characterized Vladivostok’s newspapers as predominantly progressive and oppositional, attributing this tendency

⁵⁷ Ibid. Ф. 4888. Оп. 5, Д. 605. Л. 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Л. 43.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 5ч. 64 Л. Б. Л. 73–74.

⁶⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 5ч. 64 Л. Б. Л. 73–74.

to the fact that many journalists were former or escaped political exiles or individuals holding liberal political views⁶¹. Because members of the regional press actively participated in Socialist Democratic and Socialist Revolutionary organizations, the *Okhrana* accumulated substantial intelligence on local journalism and came to regard the press as an independent and influential component of the Governorate's public life.

Another important aspect of the Vladivostok Security Section's work was the surveillance of Russian political émigrés abroad. This activity had begun in 1907–1908, when the Japanese port of Nagasaki was home to a substantial colony of Russian revolutionary émigrés, among whom the Eastern Autonomous Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary Party had been established⁶². The activities of these revolutionaries were jointly monitored by Security Section agents and the Russian consul in Nagasaki. After several successful interceptions of couriers carrying weapons and revolutionary literature from Japan to Vladivostok, the chairman of the Eastern Autonomous Committee, Boris Dmitrievich Orzhikh, decided to transfer the organization's activities to Shanghai⁶³. Subsequently, the principal leaders of the Russian revolutionary émigré community left East Asia altogether. Orzhikh departed for Argentina, while Nikolai Konstantinovich Sudzilowsky, leader of the Social Democratic émigré group, relocated to the Philippines. In August 1913, an agent of the Nikolsk-Ussuriysky detective post operating under the codename "Teacher" reported that no organized revolutionary groups remained either in Shanghai or in Nagasaki; what survived were merely the powerless remnants of the organizations formerly assembled by Orzhikh and Sudzilowsky⁶⁴. Their weakness, however, did not diminish the Section's determination to keep them under observation.

In November 1913, a Korean named Han-Ki-ton approached the Russian Consulate in Shanghai requesting financial assistance⁶⁵. To the Vladivostok Section, however, he was better known under the

⁶¹ Аганов В.Л., Дударенок С.М. Записка начальника владивостокского охранного отделения. Документы Российского государственного исторического архива Дальнего Востока. 1913 г. // Исторический архив. 2016. № 1. С. 155.

⁶² РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 1. Л. 14.

⁶³ Ibid. Л. 99.

⁶⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 9ч. 64 л. Б. Л. 97.

⁶⁵ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 766. Л. 47.



Innokentyevskaya Battery, Vladivostok. Canet guns.

Photograph, late nineteenth century.

From the collection of the Alexander Solzhenitsyn House of Russia Abroad

codename “Poputchik” (“The Fellow Traveler”), serving as its confidential agent among the Russian revolutionary émigrés in Shanghai. Captain Lalevich complained to his superiors in Irkutsk that “Poputchik” had repeatedly failed to maintain regular contact and that, because of the difficulties of postal communication between Russia and China, it had become impossible to pay him consistently for his services⁶⁶. After the Revolution, Han-Ki-ton was arrested and tried as a former Security Section agent. During the proceedings it emerged that he had originally worked for the political police in Nagasaki before being transferred to Shanghai, where he remained active from July until December 1913, when he was dismissed because of his persistent failure to observe communication procedures. In 1927, he was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment under conditions of strict solitary confinement⁶⁷.

The difficulties surrounding “Poputchik” prompted Lalevich to seek a replacement. His preferred candidate was another confidential operative, Anatoly Aleksandrovich Kaigorodtsev, better known in Vladivostok under the alias Andrei Vasilyevich Sikorsky. A former amateur actor and journalist for the newspaper *Priamursky Krai*, Kaigorodtsev possessed an adventurous and unconventional character.

⁶⁶ Ibid. Л. 50.

⁶⁷ Известия. № 66. 1927.

His biography was remarkable. A cousin of the Socialist Revolutionary terrorist Ivan Kalyaev, Kaigorodtsev had joined the Socialist Revolutionary Party, been arrested, and exiled to Nolinsk in Vyatka Governorate, from where he escaped to the Russian Far East. Arrested again in Vladivostok in 1909, he agreed to cooperate with the Security Section and was recruited under the codename “Olnem”. His duties included gathering intelligence on the press as well as on Socialist Revolutionary and Social Democratic organizations⁶⁸. Lalevich strongly recommended “Olnem” for assignment to Shanghai, emphasizing the extensive network of contacts that would support his cover. Among these were Ya.G. Shustov, a Social Democrat serving as assistant manager of the Shanghai branch of the Russo-Asiatic Bank; V.D. Dmitrienko, a Socialist Revolutionary and barrister who had acted as legal representative for the millionaire Vladivostok merchant Demby, of mixed British and Japanese ancestry; and acquaintances within the trading house Ivan Churin & Co., the Vladivostok branch of the Russo-Asiatic Bank, and the Volunteer Fleet shipping company. To provide himself with a legitimate public identity, Olnem intended to work as a journalist for the newspapers *Dalekaya Okraina*, *Primorsky Krai*, *Novaya Zhizn*, and *Priamurye*⁶⁹.

Despite these impressive credentials and the carefully constructed operational legend, Colonel Aleksei Vasilyev, head of the East Siberian Regional Security Section, rejected Lalevich’s proposal, stating simply that he knew Olnem only from an unfavorable perspective⁷⁰. Instead of Shanghai, Olnem was dispatched on a mission to establish clandestine contacts in Baku.

The complicated history of Poputchik and the unsuccessful attempt to replace him with Olnem demonstrates not only the determination of the Vladivostok Security Section to monitor the Russian émigré community in Shanghai but also the remarkably close ties connecting Shanghai and Vladivostok. The operational legend devised for Olnem relied upon banking, commercial, journalistic, and transportation networks linking the two cities, illustrating the intensity of their mutual connections. The sustained interest in the Russian colony at Shanghai

⁶⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 4888. Оп. 5. Д. 605. Л. 12.

⁶⁹ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 11. Л. 74.

⁷⁰ Ibid. Л. 78.

reflected the conviction of the leadership of the East Siberian Regional Security Section that, amid the revival of revolutionary activity in European Russia, Siberia and the Far East would increasingly serve as channels for importing revolutionary literature from Asia⁷¹. According to the findings of the Soviet court, Poputchik had monitored the revolutionary Pisarenko in Nagasaki, as well as the revolutionaries Vitkop, Dzherebovsky, and Popov in Shanghai⁷².

Between 12 September and 15 October 1913, Colonel Vasilyev himself undertook an inspection tour of Shanghai and Nagasaki. In his report, he noted that during the summer a Russian revolutionary named Pisarenko had arrived in Nagasaki from Australia and established contact with representatives of the Chinese revolutionary organization the Kuomintang⁷³. In Shanghai, Vasilyev identified as the principal figures of the Russian revolutionary colony the fugitive Russian officer Dzherebovsky, Moishe Dobkin, an employee of the Chinese Maritime Customs who operated under the alias Konstantin Popov, and Vitkop, a trafficker in women⁷⁴. Significantly, all of these individuals also appeared in the reports submitted by Poputchik⁷⁵, demonstrating that both the agent and his handler, Lalevich, had been highly effective in identifying the leading personalities of the Russian revolutionary colony in Shanghai.

The Soviet historian Nikolai Eroshkin, in his influential *History of the State Institutions of Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, argued that the principal method employed by the Police Department and its subordinate Security sections consisted of the extensive use of secret agents, which he characterized as “provocation”⁷⁶. In practice, however, the principal criterion by which officers of the Security Departments were evaluated was not the number of arrests they made but rather the number of

⁷¹ Иванов А.А., Кузнецов С.И. Документы ГАИО о создании в начале XX в. в Китае и Японии центров поддержки русского революционного движения // Вестник БНЦ СО РАН. 2021. № 4 (44). С. 103.

⁷² Известия. № 66. 1927.

⁷³ Иванов А.А., Кузнецов С.И. Документы ГАИО о создании в начале XX в. в Китае и Японии центров поддержки русского революционного движения // Вестник БНЦ СО РАН. 2021. № 4 (44). С. 104.

⁷⁴ Ibid. С. 105.

⁷⁵ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 766. Л. 47а1–47а6.

⁷⁶ Ерошкин Н.П. История государственных учреждений дореволюционной России. М.: РГГУ, 2008. С. 296.

crimes prevented and the proportion of arrests that ultimately resulted in successful prosecution⁷⁷. Judged by these standards, the Vladivostok Security Section must be regarded as an effective institution. It maintained surveillance over virtually every manifestation of political and public life within the region – from attempts to organize clandestine societies to the activities of individual revolutionaries – not only in Vladivostok itself but also in neighboring foreign cities with significant Russian communities. The Section's apparent passivity reflected not institutional weakness but rather the small size, fragmentation, and consequently limited danger posed by the revolutionary movement in the Priamur region, China, and Japan.

The Section's activities extended beyond political surveillance to encompass ordinary corruption as well. An intercepted letter in the autumn of 1913 revealed that Viktor Guzevich, Chairman of the Vladivostok District Court, issued certificates authorizing legal practice even to completely illiterate applicants. Vladimir Povalo-Shvykovsky, a private attorney in Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, allegedly employed bribery to secure favorable judicial decisions with the assistance of court bailiff Mikhail Barabash and Ekaterina Alekseeva, the wife of a local justice of the peace. Meanwhile, Pantelei Popovich, secretary of the Vladivostok District Court, accepted bribes in exchange for providing lawyers with access to case files and permitting the falsification of judicial documents. Information concerning these abuses was forwarded to the Minister of Justice, Ivan Shcheglovitov⁷⁸.

The effectiveness of this system depended largely upon the officers who served in the Vladivostok Security Section. The traditional image of gendarme officers engaged in political investigations was far from uniformly positive. Reflecting on the assassination of Pyotr Stolypin, Vladimir Dzhunkovsky later argued in his memoirs that one of the principal weaknesses of the Security Sections lay in the fact that they were headed by young officers lacking sufficient moral integrity⁷⁹. Pavel Kurlov, who had served as Assistant Minister of the Interior and

⁷⁷ Перегудова З.И. Политический сыск России (1880–1917). М.: Российская политическая энциклопедия (РОССПЭН), 2013. С. 135.

⁷⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 20ч. 64 л. Б. Л. 123–124.

⁷⁹ Джунковский В.Ф. Воспоминания. Т. 2. М.: Изд-во им. Сабашниковых, 1997. С. 605.

Commander of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes before his dismissal following Stolypin's murder, similarly complained that officers engaged in political investigations regarded themselves as occupying an exceptional position and frequently ignored both local civil authorities and the normal military chain of command⁸⁰. In October 1911, the Deputy Director of the Police Department, Sergei Vissarionov, proposed assigning young officers to Security Sections in order that they might acquire practical experience before assuming command of such institutions⁸¹.

The officer corps of the Vladivostok Security Section during the period under consideration embodied many of these characteristics. Its members were generally young officers who did not always observe formal administrative hierarchies and who on more than one occasion faced accusations of improper conduct.

From March 1913 onward, the Section was commanded by Captain Lalevich. The son of a landed proprietor from Bessarabia, he was born on 7 March 1880. After graduating from the Vladimir Cadet Corps in Kyiv and the Pavlov Military School with first-class honors, he received his commission in the 73rd Crimea Infantry Regiment⁸². In July 1904, Lalevich transferred to the 148th Caspian Infantry Regiment, with which he served during the Russo-Japanese War⁸³. Among his fellow officers was V.V. Vladimirov, who would later become one of the most distinguished gendarme officers and who was, during the First World War, Head the Special Section of the Baltic Fleet Headquarters. For his conduct in combat, Lalevich received the Order of St. Anna, Fourth Class, with the inscription "For Bravery", as well as the Order of St. Stanislaus, Third Class⁸⁴. Although serving as aide-de-camp to the commander of the regiment's Fourth Battalion, he repeatedly volunteered for reconnaissance raids and participated in firefights with advanced Japanese detachments. During the Battle of Mukden, he suffered a severe

⁸⁰ Курлов П.Г. Гибель императорской России. М.: Современник, 1992. С. 86.

⁸¹ Политическая полиция России между реформами. От В.К. Плеве до В.Ф. Джунковского. Сб. документов / Вступ. ст., сост. и коммент. Е.И. Щербакова. М.: АИРО-XXI; СПб.: Алетейя, 2021. С. 225.

⁸² Список общего состава чинов Отдельного корпуса жандармов, исправлен по 13 октября 1911 г. СПб., 1911. С. 664.

⁸³ Русский инвалид. № 148. 08.07.1904.

⁸⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 17. Д. 359. Л. 557 об.



Vladivostok Police Administration. Early twentieth-century postcard.
From open sources

concussion from an artillery explosion and was evacuated to Russia for treatment. Following his recovery, he was temporarily assigned to the Irkutsk Local Brigade, from which he submitted his application for admission to the Separate Corps of Gendarmes in 1907.

Lalevich explained that his desire to leave the regular army stemmed from deteriorating health, which no longer permitted him to perform active field service. In addition to the lingering effects of his wartime concussion, he suffered from a congenital heart condition⁸⁵. His superiors consistently described him as a capable, conscientious, and morally upright officer, although they also remarked upon his frail appearance, unimposing physique, and short stature. After completing the preparatory courses at the Headquarters of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes, Lieutenant Lalevich was attached to the Tver Provincial Gendarme Directorate. While serving in Tver, he married Natalia Shlikhting (Schlichting), daughter of the Directorate's commander, Major General Vasily Shlikhting⁸⁶. Through this marriage he became connected to a wider family network within the Corps of Gendarmes. His brothers-in-law included Anton Shlikhting, who served in the Railway Gendarmerie and had been Assistant Chief of the Turkestan Regional Security

⁸⁵ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 2. Д. 11431. Л. 11 об.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Оп. 17. Д. 359. Л. 561.

Section between 1909 and 1911, and Viktor Shlikhting, an officer of the St. Petersburg Gendarme Division.

As in the Imperial Guard, close family connections among officers of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes were commonplace, giving rise to a number of enduring gendarme family dynasties.

After his service in Tver, Lalevich was assigned to the Novorossiysk Detective Post and was subsequently attached to the Astrakhan Provincial Gendarme Directorate to conduct investigations into political offenses, for which he was awarded the Order of St. Anna, Third Class⁸⁷. During his service in Astrakhan, Lalevich became the godfather of Maria, daughter of the Head of the Provincial Gendarme Directorate, Colonel Nikolai Burago, who was born on 20 June 1910⁸⁸. This episode demonstrates that the young officer enjoyed the confidence of his superiors, having been accorded such an honor. At the same time, it illustrates the formation of informal patronage networks within the Separate Corps of Gendarmes. It was also in Astrakhan, during the summer of 1911, that Lalevich received an offer to transfer to Vladivostok as Assistant Chief of the Security Section, which he readily accepted. He arrived in Primorskaya Oblast in November and immediately immersed himself in his new duties. During the investigation of the “Military Union of the Vladivostok Fortress”, it was Lalevich who personally conducted interrogations and forensic examinations⁸⁹. In November 1912, he participated in organizing the arrest of striking shop assistants employed by the Urin Brothers trading firm. After briefing the police officers involved in the operation, Lalevich left on official business and was knocked down by a powerful gust of wind, suffering a serious leg injury involving torn ligaments and multiple ruptures. Remarkably, this accident was officially recognized as a service-related wound and was entered into his service record accordingly. During his subsequent medical treatment, physicians also diagnosed him with neurosyphilis of the spinal cord⁹⁰. Among the symptoms of this illness are heightened irritability and suspiciousness, characteristics that may have influenced his personality in later years.

⁸⁷ Русский инвалид, № 86, 18.04.1910.

⁸⁸ Государственный архив Астраханской области (ГААО). Ф. 741. Оп. 3. Д. 80. Л. 8.

⁸⁹ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 1. Д. 21. Л. 168.

⁹⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 2. Д. 18556. Л. 10.

By the summer of 1913, after assuming command of the Vladivostok Security Section, Lalevich accused his predecessor, Captain Konstantin Nagrodsky, of embezzling departmental funds⁹¹. A brief investigation demonstrated that the accusation was entirely unfounded and stemmed from the personal resentment of the section's clerk, Emelyan Koverdinsky, who had taken offense because Nagrodsky had failed to pay him for helping pack his belongings before his transfer. No one investigated why Lalevich chose to support the accusation of a clerical employee against his former commander and fellow gendarme officer. V.F. Dzhunkovsky merely instructed that Lalevich be formally reminded that such personal quarrels among officers of the Corps were unacceptable, but no disciplinary or criminal sanctions followed⁹². Nevertheless, the episode appears to have established Lalevich's reputation as a difficult and quarrelsome officer. In December 1913, Lalevich forwarded a letter intercepted by the Vladivostok Security Section to Lieutenant Colonel Sizykh, Chief of the Middle Asian Railway Gendarme Police Directorate. Sizykh replied that the matter lay outside his jurisdiction and should instead be referred to the Turkestan Regional Security Section. Lalevich's response prompted the Police Department to submit a memorandum to the Headquarters of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes stating: "The sharpness and obvious disrespect shown toward Lieutenant Colonel Sizykh, who is his superior in rank, office, and position, are intolerable from the standpoint of the disciplinary regulations. When such conduct is carried over into official correspondence, it breeds mutual ill will and thereby exerts a highly detrimental influence upon the success of our common work [...] I consider it necessary to add that this incident is by no means an isolated example of the incompatibility of character and excessive self-confidence displayed by this junior officer"⁹³.

Despite these criticisms, Lalevich's career continued to advance. In the spring of 1914, he was awarded the Order of St. Stanislaus, Second Class⁹⁴. This distinction may partly be explained by the patronage

⁹¹ Ibid. Оп. 6. Д. 2951. Л. 3.

⁹² Ibid. Л. 52.

⁹³ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 51ч. 64. Л. 136.

⁹⁴ Русский инвалид, № 76. 06.04.1914.

of his father-in-law, Major General Shlikhting, himself a senior gendarme officer. Following an inspection conducted by the Chief of the East Siberian Regional Security Section in December 1913, the Vladivostok *Okhrana* received the following assessment: secret agent network – satisfactory; postal surveillance – good; physical surveillance – satisfactory; office administration and record keeping – in proper order. The principal shortcomings identified were the insufficient recruitment of new informants and the absence of effective intelligence on revolutionary organizations in the rural districts of Primorskaya Oblast⁹⁵. These criticisms, however, were not entirely fair. The limited number of agents and the absence of informants in rural areas reflected the immense territory under the Section's responsibility, the scattered settlements hidden throughout the taiga – many of them only temporary – and the simple fact that the Section lacked sufficient personnel to monitor such an extensive region.

From March 1913 onward, Lalevich's deputy was Captain Nikolai Vasilyevich Galyavin, who in many respects represented his complete opposite. Whereas Lalevich was a nobleman from Bessarabia, short in stature and frail in appearance, Galyavin came from a middle-class family in Rostov, Yaroslavl Governorate, possessed a tall and commanding physique, and was consistently described as being in excellent health⁹⁶. While Lalevich had transferred to the Corps of Gendarmes because his medical condition prevented further military service, Galyavin had been compelled to leave his regiment after beginning an affair with the wife of a fellow officer, Serafima Kavesskaya. As soon as her divorce was finalized, Galyavin married her. Despite these differences, the two officers shared remarkably similar military backgrounds. Both had served in the 148th Caspian Infantry Regiment during the Russo-Japanese War, both had participated in reconnaissance operations and combat, and both had received decorations for bravery. Lalevich had served as battalion commander's aide-de-camp, whereas Galyavin had commanded the regiment's volunteer reconnaissance detachment.

Galyavin entered the Separate Corps of Gendarmes in 1909 and was assigned to the Tambov-Ural Railway Gendarme Police Section.

⁹⁵ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 51ч. 64. Л. 149.

⁹⁶ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 2. Д. 12912. Л. 3.



Celebration of the victory of the February Revolution in Vladivostok. 1917.
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ggbain-24451

In 1910, he was temporarily attached to the Saratov Regional Security Section to receive training in political investigations. There he received an unfavorable evaluation from his superiors, who concluded that despite his diligence and professional abilities, his gentle and shy disposition rendered him unsuited for detective work⁹⁷. Nevertheless, Galyavin was appointed to Vladivostok, where he arrived in July 1913. In his new position, he successfully overcame his earlier timidity. By January 1914, he had recruited Nikifor Poluektov, a committed Marxist and one of the most prominent local socialist activists, as a confidential informant⁹⁸.

The third key figure within the Vladivostok Section was Pyotr Shibkov, a collegiate registrar serving as Officer for Special Assignments. He had begun his career as a district police officer before transferring to the Odessa Security Directorate. He later served as a clerical official in the Samara Provincial Gendarme Directorate, and in 1908 became Officer for Special Assignments and Head of Surveillance Desk of the Chita Security Section. In 1912, he was transferred to Vladivostok to occupy the same position⁹⁹.

Despite what might appear to have been far from an ideal combination of personalities among its officers, the Vladivostok Security Section succeeded in organizing its work so effectively during 1913–1914 that

⁹⁷ Ibid. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 51ч. 64. Л. 54 об.

⁹⁸ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 824. Л. 3а.

⁹⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. 50ч. 64 т. 1 (1915). Л. 11 об.

when V.F. Dzhunkovsky initiated the liquidation of the regional Security sections, the Vladivostok office was one of the few preserved. Its effectiveness rested on two complementary factors. On the one hand, it possessed experienced personnel with extensive knowledge of political investigations in the Russian Far East, particularly Chief Lalevich and Officer for Special Assignments Shibkov, both of whom were thoroughly familiar with local conditions. On the other hand, although Deputy Chief Nikolai Galyavin initially lacked practical experience in political policing and had previously received unfavorable evaluations, he quickly adapted to the new environment and became an effective investigator.

Lalevich's illness ultimately brought his career to an early end. In May 1914, he was granted a year's medical leave, from which he retired directly in May 1915 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, settling thereafter in Petrograd. During the summer of 1914, he was succeeded by Captain Ginsburg, former Chief of the Yaroslavl and Tomsk Security Sections, who had most recently commanded the Central Surveillance Detachment of the St. Petersburg Security Section. Lalevich's subsequent fate remains unknown. His deputy transferred to military intelligence during the First World War. During the Russian Civil War, Galyavin served in Admiral Kolchak's forces as Chief of Counterintelligence in Colonel Vrashtil's anti-partisan mounted ranger regiment and, together with several fellow officers, was killed by Red partisans on the Khor River in 1920. Pyotr Shibkov remained with the Vladivostok Security Section until its dissolution in February 1917; nothing is presently known of his subsequent life.

By 1913, the revolutionary upheavals of the previous decade had largely subsided and appeared to belong to a distant past. Despite continued reports from the Police Department, provincial gendarme directorates, and security sections, the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs had become convinced that the principal revolutionary threat had passed and that the remaining network of security sections had become inefficient, excessively bureaucratic, and prone to scandal¹⁰⁰. Consequently, only those sections considered indispensable because of

¹⁰⁰ Ерошкин Н.П. История государственных учреждений дореволюционной России. М.: РГТУ, 2008. С. 303.

their unique strategic circumstances were retained. The experience of the Vladivostok Security Section demonstrates that, at first glance, Dz-hunkovsky's assessment might appear justified. Between March 1913 and July 1914, the Section carried out no mass arrests, uncovered no extensive terrorist conspiracies, and dismantled no major clandestine revolutionary organizations. Yet this was not because such movements were impossible in principle. Rather, the Section's continuous and painstaking surveillance of individuals and small groups effectively prevented anti-government activity from developing into anything more substantial. Although this work appeared routine and often invisible, it reveals the high level of sophistication attained by the Russian Empire's system of political policing. At the same time, the Vladivostok experience exposed the principal weaknesses of that system: a chronic shortage of personnel to cover every sphere of intelligence work and the necessity of balancing the reformist ambitions of the Commander of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes with the operational demands of the Police Department. Even so, senior gendarme officials remained convinced that political surveillance was still inadequate and required constant expansion and improvement. Despite these persistent criticisms, the system continued to function – perhaps in spite of the shortcomings of its officers, or perhaps, paradoxically, because of the very human qualities they brought to their work.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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